

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat *Incorporated*

FEBRUARY

1993

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Meeting February 5 Plants of the Ballarat Region.
Pat and Bill Murphy.

Meeting March 5 Annual General Meeting:
Members' Night.

Excursion February 6 See Agenda Sheet

Excursion March 7, Serendip: C. Dalman.
March 6 - 8 WVFNCA Campout - 'Kangarooobie',
Princetown.



President: Dr. K. McDonnell Ph.053 326800
Secretary: Mr. J. Gregurke 394993
Treasurer: Mrs. F. Williamson 327631
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Meetings as specified are held at the School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard Street Sth., Art Building, commencing at 7.30 p.m.
EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM CROCKERS, cnr. STURT AND ARMSTRONG STS., BALLARAT, at 9.30 a.m. for FULL DAY OUTINGS OR AT 1.30 p.m. for HALF DAY*



Field Reports: December Meeting

- Ken McDonnell - The unusual season has produced excellent flowering of many plants including Goodenia, Trigger-plants and Milkmaids at Invermay.
- Harvey Hooper - Black Duck observed in tussocks of Cocksfoot. A nest with two eggs was found and the duck continued to lay an egg every second day. Unfortunately the eggs were eaten by ravens. The nest was 200 metres from the nearest water.
- Pat Murphy - Leafy Templetonia found at Sandon in on the rare and endangered species list
- Greg Binns - Peregrine Falcons chicks at Piggoreet (3 chicks) and Dereel (1 chick) have fledged and left the nests. Brolgas are at Middle Swamp. Marsh Terns in breeding plumage at Merrin Merrin swamp where conditions are ideal for breeding. The nest boxes at the swamp have been used by rosellas, teal, black ducks and a tiger snake.
- Florence Williamson - 8 Magpies of mixed ages in Ballarat North garden.
- Helen Neal - Koala seen in several trees over a 3 day period at Ballarat East.
- Lyndsay Fink - Pair of young Wedge-tailed Eagles. Koala in garden at Meredith appeared distressed and closer inspection revealed a fly-blown pouch which was successfully treated with dettol.
- Frank Harrap - At Lignum Swamp a pair of Peregrine Falcons where harassed by ravens. Three Crimson Rosellas hatched in nest box at Mount Helen. Albino Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo seen flying - it had white feathers except for yellow under the tail. A pair of Magpies and 2 young had been fed by hand but the 12 month old young have now been forced to find their own territory.

Next Meeting - Wed. Feb. 24 at the home of Tony and Virginia Dyson Durham Lead.

ORCHIDS of THE BALLARAT DISTRICT.

No. 6 of a series.

Dipodium punctatum - Hyacinth Orchid
or Spotted Orchid

Flowering time for the Hyacinth Orchid usually peaks through December to March, but plants can sometimes be seen flowering as late as May in some local areas.

It is a leafless saprophyte and will be found growing among trees and shrubs where it can attach itself to the fungus on the root of a eucalypt tree, which appears to be the commonest host plant.

The sturdy purplish brown stem, up to 80cms high, has scaly bracts near the base. The numerous flowers, in a terminal raceme, are pink with deeper pink spots and flecks, but occasionally may be very pale, white or without spots. The sepals and lateral petals are alike and spreading, and the obovate labellum has a raised centre to the upper surface.

This lovely orchid can be seen in most of our bushland areas but it is not found on the open plains to the west of Ballarat nor in the denser forests of the Wombat area.

PJM



MODERN EQUIPMENT IN PLANT IDENTIFICATION

- Mr John Jelbart -

John Jelbart conducts the course in plant identification as part of the Associate Diploma of Resource Management of SMB.

The course, which includes geology, the preparation of herbarium specimens in the correct format, plant dissections and illustrations, centres on the Linnaean binomial system of plant classification. This system is based on the characteristics of the reproductive parts of plants and was first described by Linnaeus in his Systema Naturae (1735) and adopted as the basic arrangement of all his botanical works. These works include his Critica Botanica (1737), being rules for botanical naming, Genera Plantarum (1737), and Species Plantarum (1753).

To assist students in plant dissections and observations, SMB has an array of modern equipment including stereo microscopes, one of which is fitted with a video camera and large colour monitor. This remarkable video equipment enables the tutor to demonstrate plant dissections and details without having to leave the microscope to draw diagrams or refer to other material. The large video screen is also used to present commercially prepared and pre-recorded study material to students.

FNCB members were able to use the stereo microscopes and dissecting kits on some specimens supplied by John Jelbart. Members found that the fibre-optic illumination of subject matter under the microscopes revealed true colours and fine details unobtainable with the older type of background lighting. The stereo microscope with video monitor also gave a great display of insects such as thrips and aphids and showed how much this modern equipment has assisted and clarified the process of plant identification.

AED

CLUNES SWAMP WILDLIFE RESERVE.

* <i>Arctotheca calendula</i>	Capeweed
<i>Arthropodium</i> sp	
* <i>Briza maxima</i>	Large Quaking Grass
* " <i>minor</i>	Lesser " "
* <i>Bromus unioloides</i>	Prairie Grass
* <i>Cyperus eragrostis</i>	Umbrella Sedge
<i>Dianella longifolia</i> var.	
<i>longifolia</i>	Pale Flax Lily
<i>Dichondra repens</i>	Kidneyweed
<i>Dillwynia cinerascens</i>	Grey Parrot Pea
<i>Eleocharis acuta</i>	Common Spike Rush
* <i>Epilobium billardierum</i>	Robust Willow Herb
* <i>Erodium botrys</i>	Long Storksbill
<i>Eryngium ovinum</i>	Blue Devil
<i>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</i>	River Red Gum
* <i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire Fog
* <i>Hordeum leporinum</i>	Barley Grass
* <i>Hypochoeris glabra</i>	Smooth Cat's-ear
* <i>Lolium</i> sp.	
<i>Lythrum hyssopifolia</i>	Hyssop Loosestrife
<i>Microtis unifolia</i>	Common Onion Orchid
<i>Montia australasica</i>	White Purslane
<i>Myriophyllum</i> sp.	
* <i>Phalaris aquatica</i>	Phalaris
<i>Potamogeton tricarinatus</i>	Floating Pond Weed
* <i>Romulea rosea</i>	Common Onion Weed
* <i>Rumex acetosella</i>	Sheep Sorrel
" <i>bidens</i>	Mud Dock
" <i>brownii</i>	Slender Dock
<i>Swainsona procumbens</i>	Broughton Pea
* <i>Trifolium angustifolium</i>	Narrow-leaf Clover
* " <i>campestre</i>	Hop Clover
* " <i>glomeratum</i>	Clustered Clover
* " <i>repens</i>	White Clover
* " <i>subterraneum</i>	Subterranean Clover
<i>Wahlenbergia</i> sp.	
<i>Wurmbea dioica</i>	Early Nancy
<i>Utricularia uniflora</i>	Fairies Apron

FIELD EXCURSION 6DEC92 -- LOCAL SWAMPS

A small group of hardy members left Ballarat under conditions typical of this year's Spring, it was cool and wet. The first call was Winter Swamp where the water level was at the high level seen over a number weeks now. The rain had abated as we left for a reedy patch on the Burumbeet Creek at the junction of the Windermere/Learmonth Road and Glue Pot Road (an area which will be disturbed by the construction of the Ballarat by-pass). Little was seen here although the Reed Warblers were in good voice. We travelled via Lake Learmonth to a swamp below Morton Hill (?Donovan's Swamp). Here the vegetation was lush revealing only the necks of nesting swans, however we had a good view of a swamp harrier hunting. By this time we were enjoying remarkably good weather as we moved on to Coghill's Creek. Among other sightings we enjoyed a pair of swamp harriers lazily courting and a flock of Whiskered(Marsh) Terns feeding over open water.

Lunch was beside the Creswick Creek at Clunes before we went on to Merin-Merin Swamp for the afternoon. As at other swamps the water was high and the vegetation lush. There were numerous plants in bloom giving considerable interest.

J. Gregurke recorded the avifauna and P.Murphy noted the flora.

K.McD.

Bird List for Excursion on Sunday 6th December 1993

We visited a number of local wetlands: Winter Swamp, Burumbeet Creek, Lake Learmonth, Donovan's Swamp and Merin Merin Swamp.

Grey teal
Musk Duck
Hard Head
Masked Lapwing
White-fronted Chat
Goldfinch
Raven
Silver Gull

Black Duck
Australasian Shoveller
Crested Grebe
Hoary-headed Grebe
Welcome Swallow
Starling
White Ibis
Straw-necked Ibis

Nest Boxes for Birds?

Elizabeth Stayt sent this letter to me for inclusion in the News letter:- Dated Nov 23 1992:-
"Yesterday we had Mr Jim Gundy erect four nest boxes in our garden two of them suitable for Rosellas, we are impressed with the quality of his workmanship and his knowledge of birds.

I enclose his card in case members of the F.N.C. are interested. We were acting on Roger Thomas' article in the Courier of Nov 14 1992.

Sincerely Elizabeth Stayt."

Thank you for your interest and thought Elizabeth.
From Roger Thomas' article :-

These boxes, writes Roger, are at Rosellas, Kookaburras and by using a piece of 25mm PVC piping about 8 cm long you may entice a Pardelote to take up their abode.. Ring-tailed Possums, Bats, and some unwanted guests like Bees and Starlings also find them to their liking.

Roger also suggests that suitable hollow logs could also be used by the do it your selfers, do remember that to take a hollow may deprive some bush creature of their home.

The Bird Observers Club puts out a very good leaflet and is available at regional offices of the Dep of Cons and Natural Resources. Corner of Mair and Doveton St.

A word of warning Treated pine may contain toxic substances and should not be used.

L.F.

BIRD LIST. continued.

Black Swan	Magpie
Reed Warbler	Black Cormorant
Magpie Lark	White-plumed Honeyeater
Swamp Harrier	Willy Wagtail
White-faced Heron	House Sparrow
Brown Falcon	Coot
Long-billed Corella	Marsh Tern
Chestnut-breasted Shelduck	Pippit
Little Pied Cormorant	Satin Flycatcher
Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike	Dusky Woodswallow
Tree Martin	Red-rumped Parrot
Noisy Miner	Galah
Eastern Rosella	

Order Diprotomda. Super Family Vombatoidia.

Although they are markedly different, Koalas and Wombats are more closely related in each the tail is almost absent; the pouch opens backwards and has two nipples there is one pair of lower incisors in the lower jaw and one well developed pair in the upper jaw.

The Koala is the sole surviving living representative of this family, and is known to be a member of a group with a fossil history (fragmentary) of 15,000,000 years. they and the Wombats probably shared a common ancestor 25,000,000 years ago.

Prior to European coming the Koalas were under great threat from the Aboriginal people who killed them for food and furs, and on the ground the Dingoes took their toll with the reduction of these two predators the Koalas thrived, their density increased to a point where toward the end of the 19th century they were hunted for their skins.

however, unregulated killing saw their numbers declined and they became scarce and even absent from some areas. Koala populations are limited by disease and lack of food trees, they appear to be well entrenched in some areas though.

Wombats were once classed as vermin and hunted for the bounty, this was because of the damage they did to fences and crops, they are now under no such control and suffer only from loss of habitat, because of its diet of roots and grasses and herbs which have a high silica content, the Wombats teeth grow continuously throughout its life.

They weigh up to 40Kg but a Pleistocene fossil *Phascolonus gigas* and may have weighed up to 100Kg. they were also related to the very large *Diprotodonta optatum*.

These notes and others to come are found in the Aus. Museum Complete Book Of Australian Mammals Edited by Ronald Strahan.

Elia